

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-07 FEA-01 ERDA-05 AID-05 CEA-01
CIAE-00 COME-00 EPG-02 DODE-00 FPC-01 H-01 INR-07
INT-05 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-04 OES-07
SP-02 SS-15 STR-04 TRSE-00 ACDA-07 NRC-05 NSCE-00
SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 /101 W
-----132024Z 107727 /73

O 131840Z MAY 77

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6628

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EB/ORF FOR RAICHT

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ENRG, OECD

SUBJ: SLT ISSUES RELATING TO NUCLEAR POWER

THE SECRETARIAT HAS CIRCULATED THE FOLLOWING:

BEGIN TEXT

1. AT THE REQUEST OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SLT, THE SECRETARIAT IS SUBMITTING HERewith AN ATTEMPTED IDENTIFICATION OF THE MAIN ISSUES WHICH APPEAR TO RISE IN RELATION TO THE REPORT OF THE NUCLEAR SUB-GROUP (IEA/SLT(77) 60) AND OF THE GENERAL NUCLEAR POSITION IN RELATION TO THE AGENCY'S REDUCED DEPENDENCE OBJECTIVES. THE NOTE IS INTENDED AS PART OF THE PREPARATION FOR THE GOVERNING BOARD DISCUSSION OF NUCLEAR ENERGY, TO TAKE PLACE AT ITS MEETING BEGINNING 27TH JUNE.

2. THE CURRENT OECD ESTIMATES FOR NUCLEAR POWER INDICATE A NUCLEAR CAPACITY IN 1985 OF 7 MMB/DE. THIS REPRESENTS A REDUCTION OF APPROXIMATELY 2 MMB/DE FROM ESTIMATES OF ONLY A FEW MONTHS EARLIER AND IS THE LATEST OF A CONTINUING DECLINE IN NUCLEAR POWER EXPECTATIONS. THE EFFECT OF THESE REDUCTIONS WILL BE TO PLACE GREATER PRESSURE ON OIL IMPORTS WHICH ARE ALREADY UNACCEPTABLY HIGH AND EVEN THESE LATEST ESTIMATES MUST BE CONSIDERED AT RISK. AFTER 1985, ALL INDICATIONS ARE THAT EVEN

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GREATER USE MUST BE MADE OF NUCLEAR POWER. THUS, THE CHAIRMAN OF THE GOVERNING BOARD HAS DRAWN ATTENTION, AT POINT (X) OF HIS SUGGESTED RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENERGY POLICY (IEA/GB(77)19) TO THE IMPORTANCE OF NUCLEAR POWER FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF OUR REDUCED DEPENDENCE OBJECTIVES. THERE IS NO AVAILABLE ALTERNATIVE TO REPLACE THE NUCLEAR CAPACITY OF THE AGENCY NOW FORESEEN, AND ANY FURTHER REDUCTION IN THAT CAPACITY WOULD PLACE A SERIOUS EXTRA BURDEN ON THE GROUP AS A WHOLE.

3. THE RECENT REDUCTIONS ARE IN SIGNIFICANT PART THE RESULTS OF SEVERAL CRITICAL ISSUES WHICH ARE PLAGUING NUCLEAR POWER: PUBLIC CONCERN OVER SAFETY AND PROLIFERATION, CHANGING REGULATORY STANDARDS, AND HANDLING OF RADIOACTIVE WASTE. THE RECENT DECISION OF THE US GOVERNMENT TO DEFER INDEFINITELY THE REPROCESSING OF SPENT FUEL FROM NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS AND FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLUTONIUM BREEDER, AND TO ENCOURAGE OTHER COUNTRIES TO DO THE SAME, HAS RAISED IMPORTANT ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS.

4. THE ISSUES IDENTIFIED RELATE TO THE ENERGY IMPLICATIONS OF POSSIBLE COURSES OF ACTION. MATTERS SUCH AS PROLIFERATION POTENTIAL ARE NOT COVERED ALTHOUGH ABVIOUSLY THEY MUST BE WEIGHED ALONG WITH THE ENERGY ISSUES. FURTHERMORE, IT IS PROPOSED NOT TO DISCUSS SAFETY AND LICENSING PRACTICES SINCE SUCH MATTERS HAVE BEEN COVERED AND CONTINUE TO BE COVERED IN OTHER FORA.

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5. IN THE SECRETARIAT'S VIEW THE FOLLOWING MAIN PROBLEM AREAS ARISE:

1. URANIUM RESOURCE AVAILABILITY
2. AVAILABILITY OF FUEL CYCLE FACILITIES AND SERVICES:
 - A. ENRICHMENT
 - B. REPROCESSING
 - C. HIGH LEVEL WASTE STORAGE AND/OR DISPOSAL
3. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT ON:
 - A. BREEDERS/ALTERNATE CONCEPTS
 - B. WASTE DISPOSAL
4. SECURITY OF ENERGY SUPPLY FOR INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES
5. RELATIONS WITH LDCS.

6. IT WOULD BE HELPFUL IF DELEGATIONS WOULD COMMENT AS FREELY AS POSSIBLE ON THE FOUR MAIN ISSUES IDENTIFIED ABOVE, FROM THEIR NATIONAL POINT OF VIEW, AND OFFER PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS AS TO THE APPROPRIATENESS OR INAPPROPRIATENESS OF IEA ACTION IN RELATION TO EACH OF THEM. BY WAY OF ASSISTANCE TO SUCH DISCUSSION, THE

SECRETARIAT SUGGESTS THAT THE FOLLOWING MAIN QUESTIONS
ARISE IN RELATION TO THE FOUR ISSUES:

1. URANIUM RESOURCE AVAILABILITY ISSUES

(I) HOW LONG WILL URANIUM RESOURCES LAST AT
PROJECTED RATES OF USE?

(II) WITH WHAT CONFIDENCE CAN THE ABOVE QUESTION BE
ANSWERED AND WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF THAT CONFIDENCE
LEVEL ON NATIONAL ENERGY DECISIONS?

(III) HOW CAN RESOURCE ESTIMATES BE VALIDATED AND IN
WHAT PERIOD OF TIME?

(IV) WHAT ARRANGEMENTS ARE FEASIBLE TO ASSURE
AVAILABILITY OF RESOURCES BY COUNTRIES WHICH DO NOT HAVE
INDIGENOUS SUPPLIES?

THE IAEA AND NEA JOINTLY STUDY URANIUM RESOURCES IN THE
EXISTING MAIN PRODUCERS, THE IEA IS INVOLVED WITH BOTH
THESE AGENCIES IN AN EXERCISE FOR STUDYING CERTAIN POTENTIAL
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NEW PRODUCERS. BUT TOTAL INFORMATION AVAILABLE, BOTH
FROM THIS INTERNATIONAL WORK AND NATIONAL STUDY OF
URANIUM RESOURCES SEEMS INADEQUATE TO ANSWER MANY QUESTIONS.

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2. AVAILABILITY OF FUEL CYCLE FACILITIES AND SERVICES

A. ENRICHMENT

ISSUES

(I) WHEN WIL ADDITIONAL ENRICHMENT CAPACITY BE REQUIRED?

(II) WITH WHAT ASSURANCE WILL ADDITIONAL CAPACITY
BE AVAILABLE?

(III) WHAT GUARANTEES ARE NEEDED TO SATISFY THOSE
COUNTRIES WHICH DO NOT HAVE INDIGENOUS ENRICHMENT CAPACITY?

B. REPROCESSING

ISSUES

(I) IF OTHER COUNTRIES CHOOSE TO REPROCESS, WHAT WILL BE
THE US ATTITUDE TOWARDS TRANSFERS FOR REPROCESSING OF:

A. SPENT FUEL BASED UPON US SUPPLIED URANIUM?

B. SPENT FUEL BASED UPON NON-US SUPPLIED URANIUM?

C. WHAT ARRANGEMENTS FOR ACCESS TO REPROCESSING FACILITIES
ARE REQUIRED BY COUNTRIES WITHOUT SUCH FACILITIES?

C. HIGH LEVEL WASTE STORAGE AND/OR DISPOSAL ISSUES

(I) WHAT ARE FEASIBLE ARRANGEMENTS FOR HANDLING
INCREASED VOLUME OF STORAGE IF NO REPROCESSING?

(II) WHAT ARE NATIONAL LEGAL AND PUBLIC ACCEPTANCE
IMPLICATIONS OF NOT ARRANGING FOR PERMANENT DISPOSAL OF
HIGH LEVEL WASTE?

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(III) WHAT INTERNATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS MIGHT BE FEASIBLE
FOR SPENT FUEL STORAGE OR WASTE DISPOSAL?

NO IEA WORK HERE AT PRESENT.

3. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

A. BREEDERS/ALTERNATE CONCEPTS ISSUES

(I) IN US VIEW HOW AND WHEN WOULD A DECISION BE
MADE TO PROCEED WITH DEVELOPMENT FO A SPECIFIC BREEDER
OR ALTERNATE REACTION CONCEPT?

(II) WHAT TIME PERIOD IS ASSUMED FOR DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW
BREEDER CONCEPT?

(III) WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE ABOVE ANSWERS
WITH RESPECT TO ASSURED URANIUM RESOURCES?

B. WASTE DISPOSAL

ISSUES

(I) HOW IS THE PROBLEM OF DEMONSTRATING SATISFACTORY
SOLUTIONS FOR HIGH LEVEL WASTE DISPOSAL AFFECTED BY A
REPROCESSING MORATORIUM?

THE IEA IS INVOLVED WITH NEA ON CERTAIN STUDIES OF
RADIOACTIVE WASTE, THOUGH THEIR SCOPE IS COMPARATIVELY
RESTRICTED, AND THE POSSIBILITY OF ADDITIONAL INTERNA-
TIONAL COLLABORATION ON RADIOACTIVE WASTE (WHETHER WITH-
IN OR OUTSIDE THE IEA) IS UNDER STUDY IN THE NUCLEAR
SUB-GROUP AND IN CERD.

4. SECURITY OF ENERGY SUPPLY

ISSUES

(I) WHAT ARE EXPECTATIONS OF COUNTRIES WITHOUT
INDIGENOUS SUPPLIES OF URANIUM?

5. RELATIONS WITH LDCS
ISSUES

(I) IF THE IEA AS A WHOLE WERE TO DEFER REPROCES-
SING AND BREEDERS, WHAT WOULD THE EFFECTS BE ON LDCS?

END TEXT

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TEXT, NUCLEAR ENERGY, REPORTS, STUDIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 13-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977OECDP14195
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770169-0881
Format: TEL
From: OECD PARIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770562/aaaacary.tel
Line Count: 239
Litigation Code IDs:
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Litigation History:
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Message ID: cf6a3895-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2536298
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SLT ISSUES RELATING TO NUCLEAR POWER THE SECRETARIAT HAS CIRCULATED THE FOLLOWING: BEGIN TEXT
TAGS: ENRG, OECD
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/cf6a3895-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009